



Kansas State Department of Education

120 S.E. 10th Avenue
Topeka, Kansas 66612-1182

From: Dr. Martha Gage, Team Leader, Certification and Teacher Education
Beth Fultz, Title II Consultant

To: Dr. Andy Tompkins, Commissioner

Date: September 29, 2000

Subject: Questions regarding test requirements for the Title II State Report Card

Is it legally defensible for institutions to require passing scores on tests to complete an approved teacher preparation program?

I posed this question to ETS. They referred me to Westat, the consulting agency hired by the US Department of Education to oversee the State Report Card reporting for Title II.

Westat responded by sending me a copy of FAQ's on their website that the legal counsel at US Department of Education provided on this subject.

"A program completer is one who has met all of the educational or training requirements in a state-approved course of study for initial teacher certification or licensure. This definition is silent with regard to the practice of some institutions that require their students to take and pass all state assessments before they can complete all of the program's educational or training requirements (including practice teaching), i.e., become a program completer".

Westat also referred my question directly to legal counsel at the US Department of Education for clarification on institutions that change program requirements mid-stream on students previously accepted to a program. It is unknown how long it will take the US Department of Education legal counsel to issue a response.

I then talked with Rod Bieker who confirmed: An institution's program must be approved by the state. If part of the program requirement requires the successful completion of tests and it is approved by the state, then yes it would be legally defensible. Also, it would be legally defensible if a regulation were passed that required all institutions include in their program pass requirements on certain tests.

Are the quartile rankings required in the state report card law, regulation, or US Department of Education policy.

I posed this question to Westat. Their response: "The law doesn't specifically use the term 'quartile rankings'. Section 207(b)(5) requires the states to report 'the percentage of teaching candidates who passed each of the assessments used by the State for teacher certification and licensure, disaggregated and ranked, by the teacher preparation program in that State from which the teacher candidate received the candidate's most recent degree, which shall be made available widely and publicly'."

NCES, a division within the US Department of Education, was given a mandate by Congress to develop definitions for the Title II reporting system. NCES decided to use the quartile approach as a compromise to meet the rankings requirement.

Certification & Teacher Education

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I also talked with Rod Bieker on this topic. He confirmed the ranking of institution requirement in the law. He also said this law was written as a "statutory provision" and the clause "in a uniform and comprehensible manner that conforms with the definitions and methods established" in essence means that if we (the state) choose not to follow their directions, they (the federal government) can withhold funds we receive under the Higher Education Act.

How many units now require passing scores on the PPST and PLT for program completion?

I contacted the Title II individual at each institution and asked this question. For the PPST, 14 institutions (7 public; 7 private) require a passing score on all 3 sections for admission to their program. 1 private institution did not have pass requirements for 99/00, but will require passing scores for admission beginning 00/01. 5 (private) institutions require passing scores before student teaching and the other 2 (private) require passing scores before graduation.

Regarding the PLT: 14 institutions (5 public, 9 private) do **not** require the PLT or NTE. 3 private institutions required passing scores for the 1999/2000 academic year program completers, 2 (1 private and 1 public) institutions will require passing scores for the 2000/2001 academic year program completers and 1 private institution will require passing scores for the 2002/2003 academic year. 2 institutions are considering, but are still undecided on the issue of requiring the PPLT for 2000/2001 completers

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Higher Ed Institution	PPST - all 3 tests	PLT
Baker University	yes-student teaching	no yes-02/03-st teaching
Benedictine College	yes-admission to program	yes as of 99/00-grad
Bethany College	yes-student teaching	no
Bethel College	99/00-2/3-admission 00/01-3/3-admission	no
Emporia State University	yes-admission	no-99/00 yes-00/01-grad
Fort Hays State University	yes-admission	no-99/00 undecided 00/01
Friends University	yes-student teaching	no
Haskell Indian Nations Univ	yes-graduation	no
Kansas State University	yes-admission	no
Kansas Wesleyan University	yes-student teaching	no
McPherson College	99/00-no 00/01-yes-graduation	no
MidAmerica Nazarene Univ	yes-admission	no
Newman University	yes-admission	no-99/00 yes-00/01-grad
Ottawa University	yes-student teaching	yes-to be considered a program completer
Pittsburg State University	yes-admission	no
Saint Mary College	yes-admission	no-99/00 undecided-00/01
Southwestern College	yes-admission	no
Sterling College	yes-admission	no
Tabor College	yes-admission	yes-to be considered a program completer
University of Kansas	yes-admission	no
Washburn University	yes-admission	no
Wichita State University	yes-admission	no

Draft response: Questions from Dr. Schrock, ESU

According to the Federal Department of Education, 100% pass rates were not the intent of the Title II legislation. Nor was it the goal (in their opinion) of the US Congress to mandate each higher education institution require passing scores for graduation. Some states (Nebraska for example) do not even require testing for certification.

Kansas requires passing scores on the PPST and PLT for certification. The State Board of Education has not asked institutions in Kansas to require passing scores for either admission to a program or completion of a degree. Program completion requirements are individual institution decisions. The program requirements must be public and on file with the Kansas Department of Education.

As of 9/26/00 6 Kansas institutions require a passing score on the PLT for program completion.

- 2 private universities (Ottawa and Tabor) have 5 step program completion requirements. The PLT is considered the fifth step which could or could not occur before graduation.
- Baker has made passing the PLT a student teaching requirement beginning 02/03.
- Benedictine required 99/00 graduates pass the PLT.
- Newman and Emporia State will require a passing score for 00/01 graduates.
- 2 institutions (Ft Hays and St. Mary) report being undecided for 00/01 graduates.

If an individual takes the same test more than once, the highest score is to be used. To make sure this occurs it is the individual institutions responsibility to verify program completer and test score matches during the time period allowed by ETS. This year's time frame is early December. Should an institution disagree with ETS a dispute resolution process is provided in our state plan.

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Subject: Dear Dr. Tompkins:
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Dear Dr. Tompkins:

ESU has redefined program completers as only those who pass the PLT and additionally will deny an education bachelors degree to students who do not pass the PLT. We were told that "everyone is doing it" but I have checked with other schools and that is not quite the case. Such policies really do abandon students at the 11th hour and I have already lost one who switched to non-teaching because of the risk. It is becoming harder to recruit intellectual students who are serious about their life to become teachers when they see more and more policies, often arbitrary and never grandfathered, that represent reform hoops of questionable value.

My question stems from Acting Dean Bailey at KU's reply that KSDE is considering closer definition of Title 2 reporting that may affect the impact of these regulations. Can you provide any additional information here? One strategy I can use is to start my biology teachers-to-be on trial runs at the PLT so they can use first runs as practice to nail a passing score, but that may place my institution at risk depending on how the percentage (80%) is calculated. If a person takes it and passes the third time, do we have a completion rate of 100% or 33%?

These details are necessary as I work to defuse the damage of this "reform" for my students here.

The NTE was a basic aptitude test that gave my secondary biology teachers no problem. The PLT has substantial power reading and requires fluency in current education fads, and will keep us chasing new fads.

Of course, the real damage control needs to be done by those "educational leaders" in contact with the simple-minded legislative reformers who are treating our students like products and allowing ETS to drive our programs.

Can I get any new information before next Thursday's ESU Council of Teacher Education meeting?

Also, the Science Writing Committee meets again this Saturday at K-State